

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET / CODEWORD (XGDS)~~

October 6, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER  
SUBJECT: Arab-Israeli Fighting

Fighting broke out on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts at about 2:00 Middle East time (8:00 a.m. Washington). Tension had been building for several days as a result of the high state of Egyptian alert and Syrian troop redeployments. Yesterday the Soviets began to fly transport planes into Damascus and Cairo to take dependents out of the area, apparently in anticipation of imminent conflict. Early this morning the Israelis, reversing their earlier assessment, told us that they had firm intelligence that a coordinated Egyptian-Syrian attack would take place before nightfall.

The Course of the Fighting

The Israelis told us that they would not open hostilities, and we have no reason to believe that they did. Their reconnaissance planes were active just prior to the outbreak of the fighting, however, and our intelligence sources are not exactly sure how the battle began. In the first day of combat, most of the fighting has been along the cease-fire lines. The Israelis appear to have attained control of the air, but have not bombed Arab airfields or made deep raids beyond the cease-fire lines. The Egyptians have managed to cross the Suez Canal in a few areas, and are trying to maintain their toeholds in the Sinai. Israeli counterattacks against these positions can be expected during the night. The Israelis will be very reluctant to accept a cease-fire with a return to the status quo ante.

On the Syrian front there has been intense fighting, but Syrian forces have not penetrated Israeli anti-tank defenses. Jordan has remained outside the battle. Casualties are not yet known, but the Egyptians have admitted losing ten aircraft. Soviet military moves in the area have not been provocative thus far.

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DECLAS-Impossible to Determine Date.  
BYAUTH-Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

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Diplomatic Steps

As soon as we learned of the likelihood of hostilities, I contacted Ambassador Dobrynin and told him the Israelis had told us they would not open hostilities. I also talked to the Israelis, who reassured me there would be no preemptive strike. Subsequently, I saw the Egyptian and Syrian Foreign Ministers. We sent messages to Kings Hussein and Faisal as well. Once hostilities had begun, we explored the possibility of gaining Soviet support for a Security Council meeting that would call for a cease-fire with a return to the status quo ante. We have had no reply and have not formally asked for a Security Council meeting.

The WSAG met this morning to consider what step we should take to protect US interests. It will meet again this afternoon. US forces in the Mediterranean have been alerted, but have not been moved as yet. 2

Critical Issues

Thus far American citizens in the Middle East seem to be safe and there have been no threats of an Arab oil boycott. If fighting resumes tomorrow and the Arabs suffer serious setbacks, both these US interests could be endangered.

On the diplomatic front we face a possible issue of how to handle a call for a cease-fire in place. The Israelis would be very reluctant to accept a cease-fire that left any of the occupied territories in Arab hands, but we could encounter strong international pressures to urge the Israelis not to reopen hostilities tomorrow.